

Staffordshire Police and Crime Panel

Report of the Chairman of the Police and Crime Panel

To Staffordshire County Council

In accordance with agreed practice I am reporting on matters recently dealt with at a meeting of the Staffordshire Police and Crime Panel in order to draw your attention to issues of wider interest and/or implications.

1 November 2017

We met at Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Civic Centre with an agenda that included the following items:

Feedback from members who had site-visited the MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) on 15 September 2017 - A significant issue had been the number and complexity of referrals being made which highlighted the importance of information sharing amongst agencies. Members sought and obtained confirmation from the Police and Crime Commissioner that funding levels for the service would be maintained. He also reported that his Office were supporting the MASH in developing the use of technology to aid the management of the information received and prioritise their workload. He sought to secure best advantage from the MASH resource and cited research by Stoke-on-Trent City Council on the effectiveness of work with vulnerable families as a valuable source from which to consider how support could best be provided in the future.

Proposed Changes in Police and Fire and Rescue Services' Governance in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent - The Panel had formally supported the Commissioner's Business Case for the adoption of the Governance Model for collaboration between the Police and Fire and Rescue Services in Staffordshire. (under which the Commissioner would become the Fire and Rescue Authority and the two services remain independent of each other). The Principal Authorities in Staffordshire had supported the Representative Model whereby the Commissioner would be afforded a seat on the existing Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Commissioner reported that the Business Case together with his response to the outcome of consultation on its content had been forwarded to the Home Office on 3 October 2017 for consideration under an independent assessment procedure prior to final decision by the Home Secretary. He understood that representations had been made to the Home Office about the assessment procedure and could not therefore give a detailed timetable for any future developments.

Commenting on the submission to the Home Office, the Commissioner envisaged the Business Case, if supported, would provide a further 40-70 front line Police officers and give stability to the Fire and Rescue Service, removing the risk of redundancies. The Case was based on robust, tested evidence and was the most comprehensive of those submitted to the Home Office. He was heartened by the level of engagement in the consultation exercise both by the community and public sector groups.

Questioned on the absence from the Case of any information on the operational implementation of changes, the Commissioner stressed that his role would relate to the 'governance' of the services and that the implementation of change was entirely for each, independent Chief Officer to lead on. That degree of detail was not appropriate at this stage of discussions.

It was noted that the Panel's role would extend to the Fire and Rescue Service, with its remit and responsibilities mirroring those already in place in relation to the Police service. Arrangements are being made for the Local Government Association to provide a training/briefing session for Panel members on the statutory role of the Fire and Rescue Service and on the implications for the Panel of any formal collaboration arrangements.

Medium Term Financial Strategy – Update - Whilst it was usual for the November Panel meeting to receive an MTFS/Budget update from the Commissioner within which he gave an overall picture of the anticipated financial position of both the Force and his Office based on preliminary funding figures, he reported that he was unable to do so on this occasion due to the number and wide ranging nature of budgetary uncertainties affecting policing. These included the need for increased funding to address the challenges facing policing including terrorism and cyber crime, the government's decision to grant a bonus award to Police Officers at a cost of approximately £700,000 over the next 2 years and queries as to whether any action will be taken to address the resulting disparity with other personnel, and the postponement of a review of the police funding formula. Of local significance was the possible effect of changes in governance arrangements for Police and Fire and Rescue Services in Staffordshire.

The Commissioner commented that the National Association of PCCs is lobbying government for the relaxation of the cap on the Policing Precept.

Other issues considered by the Panel were the proposed creation of a National Association of Police and Crime Panels and an update on the delivery of the Commissioner's Safer, Fairer, United Communities for Staffordshire Strategy

Details of Panel meetings are issued to contact officers in each of the District/Borough Councils in the County and Stoke-on-Trent City Council for posting on their own web sites.

David Williams

Staffordshire Police and Crime Panel Chairman

Staffordshire County Council